from financial institutions and/or cooperatives in the fertilizer sector so as to minimise the need for budgetary support. As the required funding arrangements could not be tied up, the revival package is being reformulated from the stand point of the financial institutions.

The nitrophosphate, melamine and Saudi Arabian Workshop Projects of RCF, PPCL's pyrites based SSP project, NFL's Panipat Expansion Project and KRIBHCO's proposals for manufacturing MDF Board, setting up an Argon Gas Recovery Unit and participating in the equity of a DAP company overseas have been dropped due to adverse evolution of the project viability parameters. The nitrophosphate project of KRIBHCO is also being reconsidered by the Society on these grounds. Pre-project activities of the Oman India Fertilizer Project of KRIBHCO/RCF and the Nellore Project of IFFCO are at an advanced stage.

(d) Plan expenditure is being regularly monitored and the progress of major projects closely reviewed to minimise the slippages against implementation schedules.

Exemption to Rice Exporters

*179. DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) the details of exemption granted earlier to the rice exporters from the levy rice;

(b) whether the Government have withdrawn the exemption granted to the rice exporters;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) the reasons for re-imposition of the levy specification; and

(e) the extent to which it would help the Public Distribution System network?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) In the 1995-96 rice marketing season *superfine* and *fine* rice meant for export was exempted from levy.

(b) to (d). Exemptions from levy were allowed In the year 1995-96 in view of comfortable levels of stock of rice in the Central Pool. The Central Government has, however, not agreed to allow any exemption to any variety of non-basmati rice either for internal market or for export, from levy obligation in the current kharif marketing season 1996-97.

The procurement of rice in the marketing year 1995-96 came down to 98.80 lakh tonnes from 134.03 lakh tonnes in 1994-95 Season. In order to ensure adequate procurement of rice for Central Pool for meeting the demand for PDS and other welfare schemes, it has been decided not to allow exemption from levy in the current marketing year 1996-97.

(e) Collection of levy without exemptions this year will result in higher level of procurement and increased availability of rice for PDS and other welfare schemes.

Natural Gas for Urea

*180. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state :

(a) whether his Ministry have demanded release of natural gas for the urea industry to boost the domestic production thereof and reduce country's dependence on imports; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SIS RAM OLA) : (a) and (b). The demand of natural gas for different sectors exceeds its actual availability. Hence, the allocations for the consumer industries, including fertilizer plants and projects, are periodically determined through, institutionlised inter-Ministerial consultations.

Investment in Pharma Sector

1529. SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the country is losing out badly in regard to the latest technology and investment in pharma Sector;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof along with the details to direct foreign investment in the drug sector during the last three years;

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to liberlise the drug sector for harnessing huge potential for foreign investment through provision of patent protection to the foreign investors;

(d) the details of action plan formulated in this regard; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to amend the Indian Patent Act, 1970, to attract, the latest pharmacy technology?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d). The existing policy makes provisions for foreign investment upto 51% in the case of all bulk drugs, their intermediates and formulations; investment above 51% is considered on a case to case basis in areas where investment is not forthcoming and the production of the bulk drug is from basic stage.

(e) As regards Indian Patent Act, 1970, under the TRIPS agreement of the WTO agreement a developing country like India has time till January 1, 2000 to